Introduction

James Manor

Adrian Leftwich has recently identified two problems that assail the study of Third World politics. First, there has been 'a drift away from some of the fundamental questions to do with the role of power, politics and the state', so that in studies of the Third World, the discipline of politics has 'to some extent lost its way'. Second, the reluctance of many western governments and international aid agencies to consider the political dimension in their policy studies has distanced political analysts from research exposure to the role of politics and the state in the development process.[1]

These two problems are related but different, and they need to be tackled in different ways. Political analysts at IDS are at work on both fronts. The second problem is being addressed through research on the 'developmental state' in various Third World settings. This *Bulletin* arises out of an effort to address the first problem by redirecting the attention of political scientists to fundamental questions such as those outlined above.

To some extent, these two initiatives take us in opposite directions. The work on the developmental state carries researchers deeper into development studies, while the work on fundamental political questions represents something of a withdrawal — however temporary. But both are essential if the study of Third World politics is to possess the clarity and coherence that it needs to play a useful role in development studies, or just to maintain intellectual respectability. The increasingly widespread recognition that politics matters in development outcomes[2] only adds urgency to these initiatives.

As part of our attempt to tackle fundamental questions in the study of Third World politics, the IDS and the German Foundation for International Development jointly organised a conference in Berlin in July, 1989. It was attended by political scientists from Europe and the Third World — from Britain, France, Germany, the Soviet Union, China, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Cameroon, and Chile. The participants were drawn from a range of methodological traditions, schools of thought and sub-fields within Third World political studies. This *Bulletin* contains several of the papers presented there. A fuller set will appear in a book to be published soon.[3]

All of those who took part were keenly aware that the two paradigms or schools of thought that have dominated the field over the last quarter-century now face severe difficulties. The first of these — the 'political development' school — yielded important insights, but its expectations of a unilinear pattern of change, and of covergence among less developed nations were misplaced. It also tended to create models which presumed more equilibrium and fewer contradictions in polities and societies than were there. It often emphasised stability at the expense of change and social justice. Many in this school made simplistic contrasts between 'tradition' and 'modernity', and tended to underestimate the diversity among Third World countries, the importance of political economy within nations and of the international economic order.

The second, 'dependency' school also taught us much that was valuable, but it emphasised the importance of economic forces — especially international forces — at the expense both of politics and of the varied cultural and historical particularities within nations. Its preoccupation with class as an analytical category underplayed the importance of indigenous or hybrid social institutions. It was useful in analysing small countries which depended heavily on the export of one or two primary commodities, but it was less adequate at assessing larger, more complex political economies. It neither anticipated nor explained the rise of newly industrialising countries on the 'periphery' of the international economic system, or the re-emergence of liberal political regimes in places like India after the Emergency and Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile in the 1980s.[4]

Our purpose is not to formulate a new paradigm. That may eventually be necessary, but we prefer to set it to

[1] A. Leftwich, 'Politics and Development Studies' in A. Leftwich (ed.) *New Development in Political Science* (Aldershot, 1990) pp 82, 87 and 91.

[2] See for example, ibid.; D. Goldsworthy, 'Thinking Politically about Development', *Development and Change* (1988) pp 505-30; the article by Richard Crook in this collection; and recent remarks by Douglas Hurd, the British Foreign Secretary.

[3] J. Manor (ed.), *Rethinking Third World Politics* (Longmans, forthcoming). I am grateful to all of the participants in the conference for comments which have helped to shape this introduction. They were Jean-Francois Bayart, Chai-Anan Samudavanija, Christopher Clapham, Richard Crook, Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, Hartmut Elsenhans, Manuel Antonio Garreton, Geoffrey Hawthorn, Sudipta Kaviraj, Talukder Maniruzzaman, Achille Mbembe, Jean-Francois Medard, Henner Papendieck, Pei Min Xin, Eberhard Sandschneider, Alexei Vasiliev and Rudolph Wagner.

one side for the time being. We are reacting against the old paradigms which distorted our understanding of events in Third World polities as much as they advanced it. Both the 'political development' and 'dependency' schools approached political systems in search of structural determinants which in our view were seldom present. In their eagerness to set agendas for Third World regimes, members of the two schools were often distracted from learning what was actually happening within and around those regimes. With their teleological biases, they tended to begin their studies with the script already half-written. The old paradigms were ideologies as much as they were modes of analysis. They tended towards monopolistic claims of truth for their own world view. We make no such claim — indeed, we are not seeking to present a single world view — and this means that our map of the discipline of politics looks rather different from theirs.

We are attempting here to clear our heads by returning to a few basic questions. What has been happening in Third World political institutions and processes in recent years? What has been happening, first in terms of political practice, and second in the ways that people conceive of and speak about politics? Finally, how do we find out what has been happening? If new, more satisfactory paradigms are to be devised, or if analysts of Third World politics are to make a useful contribution to development studies, then we need clearer answers to these questions.

Our aim, in addressing these issues, was to be provocative rather than definitive. We neither sought nor achieved a unanimity of view, but we were surprised at the degree of consensus that emerged. We were in broad agreement not only on the inadequacies of the old paradigms, but on numerous other matters, three of which are worth mentioning. First, we agreed about the need to pay attention to change over time — to recent political trajectories, and often to the longer-term historical background. It is insufficient to focus only or mainly on the condition of a political system in one brief phase.

That initial consensus was not, perhaps, too surprising given the number of participants from Europe where the fields of history and politics intersect far more than in most North American universities. But we were well nigh astonished to discover the extent to which many of us were preoccupied with the theatrical and imaginary dimensions of politics[5] — and to find that a concern with these issues united people studying such contrasting political systems as Communist China and West African cases like Togo and Cameroon.

It is of course true that the cultural particularities in such different settings vary enormously, so that the content of political theatre and imaginings will vary markedly from case to case. The symbols and theatrical devices used by the Tiananmen protesters were not at all like the images of witchcraft and devouring used by Cameroonians when they think and speak about politics.[6] But the importance of the theatrical and imaginary dimensions — and of political discourse more broadly, another major concern of our papers — is common to all cultural settings.

We were again surprised to see consensus developing round another issue — the tendency for incongruous or contradictory elements to co-exist uneasily in curious hybrids, which change shape from time to time, but which seldom give way to enduring syntheses in the way that analysts working in both the Marxist and Weberian traditions too often expect. No sooner had the Africa and Asia specialists at the conference agreed among themselves that this tendency was a feature of their regions but not of Latin America, than a Chilean participant protested that his region should not be excluded.

The five papers included here cover a wide range of issues and cases. They move — overlapping somewhat at times — from discussions of how we might analyse the state and politics, to assessments of how political actors (in both elite and mass) think and speak about politics, and how their thinking, imagining and discourse shapes and is shaped by political structures. They then move on to detailed examinations of institutions, political practice and state-society relations.

Chai-Anan Samudavanija's article offers a critique of much used approaches to the study of Third World politics — especially, though not only, the 'political development' or 'modernisation' school. He raises a number of issues, three of which are worth noting here. First, he criticises the tendency to conceive of Third World politics in terms of dichotomies, to think in binary terms of just two sets of categories. Examples of this include the juxtaposition of 'modern' and 'traditional' forces, or of 'democratic' and 'non-democratic' political systems. Studies of the relationship between economic and political development also betray this tendency. He finds that this leads to simplistic and excessively tidy analyses.

Politics in less developed countries is more complicated than that. To make sense of these complexities, he proposes that we use at least three variables — that we think in terms of a three-dimensional state. He fixes upon politicians' preoccupations with three things: security, development and participation. The resulting analytical model is considerably more complex and

[4] On the decline of these paradigms, see for example, T. Smith, 'Requiem or New Agenda for Third World Studies', *World Politics* (July, 1985).

[5] Note the differences between these two terms. The theatrical dimension is the result of initiatives undertaken by political actors — in or out of power — while the imaginary dimension mainly refers to the construction which is put on politics in the popular mind.

[6] On the latter, see A. Mbembe, 'Power and Obscenity in the Post-Colonial Era' in Manor (ed.) *Rethinking Third World Politics*.

flexible than those based on dyads. He then uses the model to remind us that most Third World leaders are usually more concerned with security — their own political and personal security, and that of their regimes — than with economic development or participation. This hugely important point is often underplayed in discussions of Third World politics, not least when the role of the state in development is being assessed.

Chai-Anan also raises questions about the way in which patterns of change are conceptualised by many of those who have worked within both the 'political development' school and the Marxist tradition. He is uncomfortable with the notion that change tends to occur when two opposing forces interact in a dialectical mode — thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Many of the actual processes of change that he has studied do not result in neat syntheses. Instead, change tends to involve adjustment and coexistence between opposing forces rather than conflict playing itself out through a dialectical process. Change tends not to produce a single enduring synthesis. Polities and societies tend to contain incongruous mixtures of elements which are in disequilibrium.

It follows that Chai-Anan — like the other contributors to this project — is suspicious of the teleological thinking that characterises the work of both the 'political development' and the 'dependency' schools, and of many whose main concern is the role of politics in economic development. He argues that events tend to proceed not in a unilinear direction, but in a less predictable, less constant manner.

Sudipta Kaviraj's article also focuses on the way in which the state and society are conceptualised and talked about, but he is interested not only in how political analysts think and write, but in how ordinary citizens see their polity and society. His paper deals with one case, India, and — like many others that emerged from the Berlin conference — it traces changes that have occurred over time, since the days of M. K. Gandhi. He does so partly because he is dissatisfied with the ahistorical and excessively economistic perceptions of social and political change which have loomed large in discussions of India.

His complex argument defies summation, but a few of his ideas deserve mention here. He identifies what he regards as theoretical faults in recent discourse, misperceptions that reveal concrete, structural problems in India's state-society relations. He argues that the state has remained largely external to society since independence, despite the huge extension of the state machinery. He believes that this externality is the result of the failure of political elites to reconstitute the popular understanding of politics. Had they knitted the new conceptual vocabulary concerning rights, institutions, impersonal power, secularism, etc., into everyday vernacular discourse, had they created a single political language for the entire polity, then state and society, and elites and mass would have been more adequately integrated.

The enormous growth of the state has necessitated the recruitment of large numbers of personnel to work at lower levels of the system who see and interpret the political world in terms of a different, popular discourse. The result is that arguments in favour of reform and social justice are used as justifications for nepotism and corruption. So, as Indian politics becomes more democratic in the sense that it comes increasingly into line with what most ordinary Indians consider reasonable, it conforms less to the principles of a secular, democratic state as articulated, for example, by Nehru. Kaviraj is suggesting — among other things — that theory and discourse not only reveal how politics works, but that changes in theory and discourse can make a material difference in the workings of politics.

Rudolph Wagner's paper on the crisis which culminated in the killings around Tiananmen Square in June, 1989 also assesses the relationship between institutional structures and political discourse. He focuses on the way in which the weakness of official institutions renders formal political discourse unreal and thwarts any attempts by organised social groups to engage in dialogue with those in political control. He begins by demonstrating that the institutional structures of both the state and the Chinese Communist Party, which Deng Xiaoping and his reformist colleagues claimed to be (and at first, were) strengthening from 1978 onwards, proved to be insubstantial amid the economic and political crises of the late 1980s. The circle of aged leaders round Deng were able to use their personalised networks of clients to brush these institutions aside and to take control by deploying lethal force. Whatever institution-building had occurred since 1978 was swiftly undone.

This wrecked any chance of dialogue between the young people of Tiananmen and those in political control. It reduced the two sides to talking past one another by manipulating symbols and discourse in highly theatrical exercises. This carries Wagner into a discussion of the theatrical and imaginery dimensions of politics — a major concern of our Berlin conference.

This collection concludes with two detailed analyses of political practice, forces and institutions, which turn out to be crucially important in shaping developmental outcomes. Both reach beyond politics to these nations' economies and to state-society relations. Both place political institutions in their historical contexts. Both are empirical studies of what has happened, not of how things ought to be or might unfold in a teleological pattern. And yet both contain useful material for those who might wish to devise rational future policies. Both illuminate the particularities of

individual cases while focusing, in varying degrees, on comparisons with other cases.

Richard Crook's article carries us across the barrier separating Anglophone and Francophone African states by comparing Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, two countries which share many common features but whose histories since independence have diverged. He argues that the conventional explanation for this divergence, which stresses contrasting economic policies, is less convincing than one which focuses on state-society relations and state capacity. Endemic political instability in Ghana has undermined the ability of successive governments to implement any economic policy. Cote d'Ivoire, by contrast, has experienced much greater stability which has made it possible for the Houphouët Boigny regime that has ruled throughout to control, tax and yet encourage the expansion of peasant export and trading economies.

Crook — who again demonstrates our concern with the recent historical trajectories of Third World polities — focuses on the differences between Ivorian and Ghanaian societies, and between the processes of political elite — and state-formation in the two countries. These have resulted in marked differences in the relative 'balance' and 'proportion' between state and civil society. Cote d'Ivoire has managed to exclude most of Ivorian society from the political community, and has created an administrative and security machine which is out of all proportion to the small size and weakness of civil society. In Ghana, civil society has always been numerically larger, more autonomous and far better organised. The Ghanaian state, despite being more thoroughly integrated with civil society than its Ivorian counterpart, has not been able to maintain sufficient autonomy from or control over civil society to implement policies effectively.

In saying this, however, Crook is not rejecting the view that the development of civil society and of a state rooted in it is a healthy trend. He believes that over the long term, Ghana's state may be better able to cope with stresses of the kind which will arise in Cote d'Ivoire over political succession, and better able to make creative innovations such as the establishment of decentralised political structures now being attempted than will the Ivorian state. The political stability that the latter has maintained has entailed the smothering of civic consciousness which has caused citizens to view the state as an alien entity. Such citizens will be more difficult to draw into productive interaction with the state than will their counterparts in Ghana.

Finally, Christopher Clapham's paper on the transformation of political institutions in revolutionary Ethiopia concentrates on the uses and limitations of the Leninist model for the achievement of state consolidation. He argues that it is less helpful to regard the Ethiopian experiment as an attempt to apply socialist solutions to the intractable problems facing African states than to see the Leninism, more specifically, as a means of forging the state into a centralised and disciplined structure of political control. The Ethiopian leaders have largely succeeded in this effort, in contrast to most other allegedly 'revolutionary' African regimes. The resulting state is not a personalised power structure as are so many others in the Third World — including, in Wagner's view, Deng's China.

Some notable achievements have followed. Highly effective structures of rural and urban government have been built. An equitable system of landholding has been established, education has been expanded and literacy has risen sharply. Even the regional movements in Tigray and Eritrea have adopted these reforms, in their drive to throw off the rule of the central government.

Ethiopia's centralised state structure has also been a source of basic failures, however, as the existence of these regional movements suggests. Ever more rigorous central control has not been an adequate answer to regional diversity. Nor has a centrally directed economy revived an ailing economy. Indeed, its inefficiencies have done damage, especially in the agricultural sector. The fragile economic base appears incapable of sustaining the huge state apparatus that has been erected. The central problem, then, in Ethiopia — unlike most of sub-Saharan Africa — is not to create an effective structure of power, but to make creative use of it. The challenge, in this country with a long tradition of government from the top, is to find ways of permitting enough participation and accommodation to enable the state to survive regional and other challenges — a task for which the Leninist model is ill-equipped.